

Claims

- 5 1. A system for creating, managing and executing a multi-element process for generating a complex entity, system comprising:
- specifying means for specifying each element of the process and implementation tasks needed to complete that element of the process;
- assigning means for assigning the tasks to different processors for execution;
- 10 notification means for notifying each different processor of its task(s) for execution;
- task result receiving means for receiving a task result of each executed task from each processor;
- a data store for storing each task result as an asset for use in implementing the elements of the process;
- 15 construction means for constructing the assets into an element result for each element of the process;
- approval means for obtaining approval of each of the element results; and
- compilation means for compiling the approved element results into the desired complex entity;
- 20 wherein the system further comprises:
- updating means for updating a management view of the multi-element process from actions carried out by the system; and
- a graphical user interface (GUI) for displaying the management view of the multi-element process at different times along its progression from creation to completion.
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2. A system according to Claim 1, further comprising task status means for assigning a status to each specified task, and wherein the GUI is arranged to display a representation of the status of each specified task.
- 30 3. A system according to Claim 2, further comprising offer means for offering the specified tasks for selection by different processors, and notification receiving means for

receiving notification of the selection of a task by one of the different processors, wherein the task status means is arranged to assign an acceptance status to the selected task.

4. A system according to Claim 3, wherein the notification means is arranged to  
5 confirm to the processor its selected task for execution.

5. A system according to Claim 2, wherein the notification means is further arranged to receive acceptance or rejection of a task by a notified processor, and wherein the task status means is arranged to assign an acceptance or rejection status to the specified task  
10 depending on whether the task has been accepted or rejected by the notified processor.

6. A system according to any of Claims 2 to 5, wherein the task status means is arranged to assign a new status to a task after the task has been specified and prior to its being assigned to a processor for execution.

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7. A system according to any of Claims 2 to 6, further comprising task cancellation means for cancelling a task, and wherein the task status means is arranged to assign a cancelled status to a task if it is cancelled.

20 8. A system according to any of Claims 2 to 7, wherein the task status means is responsive to the task result receiving means and is arranged to assign a completed status to an executed task on receipt of its corresponding task result.

9. A system according to any preceding claim, further comprising element status  
25 means for assigning a status to each specified element of the process, and the GUI is arranged to display a representation of the status of each specified element.

10. A system according to Claim 9, wherein the assigning means is arranged to assign an element to a processor for management of the element, and wherein the element status  
30 means is arranged to indicate whether or not the element has been assigned to a processor.

11. A system according to Claim 9 or 10, wherein the element status means is arranged to indicate that an element result has been approved.

12. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the approval means is also  
5 arranged to obtain approval of each element and its associated implementation tasks.

13. A system according to Claim 12 as dependent on any of Claims 9 to 11, wherein the element status means is arranged to indicate approval of a specified element and its associated implementation tasks.

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14. A system according to any of Claims 9 to 11 or Claims 12 to 13 as dependent on Claim 9, further comprising element amendment means for amending an approved element result, and wherein the element status means is arranged to indicate that an approved element result has been amended.

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15. A system according to any of Claims 9 to 11 or Claims 12 to 14 as dependent on Claim 9, further comprising element cancellation means for cancelling an element, and wherein the element status means is arranged to indicate that an element has been cancelled.

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16. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the notification means is arranged to send data messages via a telecommunications network.

17. A system according to Claim 16, wherein the data messages comprise one of the  
25 group including: an email, an instant message, an SMS text message and an MMS message.

18. A system according to Claim 16 or 17, wherein the notification means is further  
30 arranged to assign a priority to a message, and to select the type of message to be sent depending on the assigned priority.

19. A system according to any of Claims 16 to 18 as dependent on Claim 2 or Claim 8, wherein the notification means is further arranged to send a prompt message to the assigned processor(s) upon change of status of a task and/or an element.

5 20. A system according to any of Claims 16 to 19, wherein the notification means is further arranged to send a message to a processor upon assignment of a task for execution by that processor, the message including a link to details of the specified task.

10 21. A system according to Claim 10 or any of Claims 11 to 20 as dependent on Claim 10, wherein the notification means is further arranged to send a message to a processor upon assignment of an element for execution by that processor.

22. A system according to Claim 20, wherein the link comprises a URL.

15 23. A system according to any preceding claim, further comprising access means for specifying user permissions for accessing and amending an element, a task and/or an asset.

20 24. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the specifying means is arranged to enable selection of an existing asset from the data store for use in specifying at least part of an element.

25 25. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the data store is arranged to store processor information relating to the different processors for use by the assigning means and the notification means.

26. A system according to Claim 25, wherein the processor information comprises the availability of a processor to execute a task, and the assigning means further comprises availability receiving means arranged to receive the availability of a processor for executing a task.

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27. A system according to Claim 26, wherein the assigning means further comprises interrogation means for interrogating the processor information to identify processors which are available to execute a task.

5 28. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the data store is arranged to store resource information relating to a resource available to the processors for executing a task.

10 29. A system according to Claim 28, wherein the resource information comprises the availability of the resource for executing a task, and the system further comprises resource input means for receiving the availability of a resource for use by a processor in executing a task.

15 30. A system according to Claim 25, or any of Claims 26 to 27 as dependent from Claim 25, wherein the interrogation means is arranged to book a resource for use by a processor in executing the task if the resource is available.

20 31. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the GUI is user configurable and comprises means for specifying what is to be displayed in the management view.

32. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the system is arranged to handle a plurality of multi-element processes, and the GUI is arranged to display the management view of each of the plurality of multi-element processes simultaneously.

25 33. A system according to any preceding claim, further comprising scheduling means for specifying the time and/or date of completion of the multi-element process or elements thereof.

30 34. A system according to any preceding claim, further comprising proposal means for generating a general request for a complex entity creation process, and making that request available to a plurality of users.

35. A system according to Claim 34, wherein the proposal means is arranged to receive one or more specific responses to the general request, to present the one or more responses to a user for selection via the GUI and to use the selected response as the multi-element process.

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36. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the GUI is arranged to display the created complex entity.

37. A system according to any preceding claim, wherein the multi-element process is a document-creation process.

38. A system according to Claim 37, wherein the document is a multi-media document and comprises at least two of the following group including: text information, an image, a graphical representation, audio information and video information.

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39. A method of creating, managing and executing a multi-element process for generating a complex entity, the method comprising:

specifying each element of the process and implementation tasks needed to complete that element of the process;

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assigning the tasks to different processors for execution;

notifying each different processor of its task(s) for execution;

receiving a task result of each executed task from each processor;

storing each task result as an asset for use in implementing the elements of the process;

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constructing the assets into an element result for each element of the process;

obtaining approval of each of the element results;

compiling the approved element results into the desired complex entity;

updating a management view of the multi-element process from actions carried out by the system; and

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displaying the management view of the multi-element process at different times along its progression from creation to completion.

40. A method as claimed in Claim 39, further comprising:  
offering a task for selection by a processor;  
receiving notification of the selection of the task by the processor; and  
assigning an acceptance status to the selected task.

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41. A method according to Claim 40, wherein the notifying step comprises confirming to the processor its task for execution.

42. A method as claimed in Claim 39, further comprising:

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- receiving acceptance or rejection of a task by a processor, and  
assigning a status to the task according to whether it has been accepted or rejected.

43. A computer program comprising instructions for causing a computer to implement the system claimed in any of Claims 1 to 38.

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44. A computer program comprising instructions for causing a computer to implement the method claimed in any of Claims 39 to 42.

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45. A computer program according to Claim 43 or 44, embodied on a recording medium.

46. A computer program according to Claim 43 or 44, embodied on an electrical carrier signal.